

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Further to the Examiner's request, please enter the following amendments to the specification which correct the format of the sequence listing identifiers. These amendments are not believed to add new matter.

Please replace paragraph [0011] with the following, which has been marked up to show changes:

[0011] The singular forms "a", "an", and "the" as used herein and in the claims include plural reference unless the context dictates otherwise. For example, "a cell" means as well a plurality of cells, and so forth. The term "and/or" as used in the present specification and in the claims implies that the phrases before and after this term are to be considered either as alternatives or in combination. For instance, the wording "determination of a level and/or an activity" means that either only a level, or only an activity, or both a level and an activity are determined. The term "level" as used herein is meant to comprise a gage of, or a measure of the amount of, or a concentration of a transcription product, for instance an mRNA, or a translation product, for instance a protein or polypeptide. The term "activity" as used herein shall be understood as a measure for the ability of a transcription product or a translation product to produce a biological effect or a measure for a level of biologically active molecules. The term "activity" also refers to enzymatic activity. The terms "level" and/or "activity" as used herein further refer to gene expression levels or gene activity. Gene expression can be defined as the utilization of the information contained in a gene by transcription and translation leading to the production of a gene product. "Dysregulation" shall mean an upregulation or downregulation of gene expression. A gene product comprises either RNA or protein and is the result of expression of a gene. The amount of a gene product can be used to measure how active a gene is. The term "gene" as used in the present specification and in the claims comprises both coding regions (exons) as well as non-coding regions (e.g. non-coding regulatory elements such as promoters or enhancers, introns, leader and trailer sequences). The term "ORF" is an acronym for "open reading frame" and refers to a nucleic acid sequence that does not possess a stop codon in at least one reading frame and therefore can potentially be translated into a sequence of amino acids. "Regulatory elements" shall comprise inducible and non-inducible promoters, enhancers, operators, and other elements that drive and regulate gene expression. The term "fragment" as used herein is meant to comprise e.g. an alternatively spliced, or truncated, or otherwise cleaved transcription product or translation product. The term "derivative" as used

herein refers to a mutant, or an RNA-edited, or a chemically modified, or otherwise altered transcription product, or to a mutant, or chemically modified, or otherwise altered translation product. For instance, a "derivative" may be generated by processes such as altered phosphorylation, or glycosylation, or acetylation, or lipidation, or by altered signal peptide cleavage or other types of maturation cleavage. These processes may occur post-translationally. The term "modulator" as used in the present invention and in the claims refers to a molecule capable of changing or altering the level and/or the activity of a gene, or a transcription product of a gene, or a translation product of a gene. Preferably, a "modulator" is capable of changing or altering the biological activity of a transcription product or a translation product of a gene. Said modulation, for instance, may be an increase or a decrease in enzyme activity, a change in binding characteristics, or any other change or alteration in the biological, functional, or immunological properties of said translation product of a gene. The terms "agent", "reagent", or "compound" refer to any substance, chemical, composition or extract that have a positive or negative biological effect on a cell, tissue, body fluid, or within the context of any biological system, or any assay system examined. They can be agonists, antagonists, partial agonists or inverse agonists of a target. Such agents, reagents, or compounds may be nucleic acids, natural or synthetic peptides or protein complexes, or fusion proteins. They may also be antibodies, organic or anorganic molecules or compositions, small molecules, drugs and any combinations of any of said agents above. They may be used for testing, for diagnostic or for therapeutic purposes. The terms "oligonucleotide primer" or "primer" refer to short nucleic acid sequences which can anneal to a given target polynucleotide by hybridization of the complementary base pairs and can be extended by a polymerase. They may be chosen to be specific to a particular sequence or they may be randomly selected, e.g. they will prime all possible sequences in a mix. The length of primers used herein may vary from 10 nucleotides to 80 nucleotides. "Probes" are short nucleic acid sequences of the nucleic acid sequences described and disclosed herein or sequences complementary therewith. They may comprise full length sequences, or fragments, derivatives, isoforms, or variants of a given sequence. The identification of hybridization complexes between a "probe" and an assayed sample allows the detection of the presence of other similar sequences within that sample. As used herein, "homolog or homology" is a term used in the art to describe the relatedness of a nucleotide or peptide sequence to another nucleotide or peptide sequence, which is determined by the degree of identity and/or similarity between said sequences compared. The term "variant" as used herein refers to any polypeptide or protein, in reference to polypeptides and proteins disclosed in the present invention, in which one or more amino acids are added and/or substituted and/or deleted and/or inserted at the N-terminus, and/or the C-terminus, and/or within the native

amino acid sequences of the native polypeptides or proteins of the present invention. Furthermore, the term "variant" shall include any shorter or longer version of a polypeptide or protein. "Variants" shall also comprise a sequence that has at least about 80% sequence identity, more preferably at least about 90% sequence identity, and most preferably at least about 95% sequence identity with the amino acid sequences of ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1. "Variants" of a protein molecule shown in ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1 include, for example, proteins with conservative amino acid substitutions in highly conservative regions. "Proteins and polypeptides" of the present invention include variants, fragments and chemical derivatives of the protein comprising ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1. They can include proteins and polypeptides which can be isolated from nature or be produced by recombinant and/or synthetic means. Native proteins or polypeptides refer to naturally-occurring truncated or secreted forms, naturally occurring variant forms (e.g. splice-variants) and naturally occurring allelic variants. The term "isolated" as used herein is considered to refer to molecules that are removed from their natural environment, i.e. isolated from a cell or from a living organism in which they normally occur, and that are separated or essentially purified from the coexisting components with which they are found to be associated in nature. This notion further means that the sequences encoding such molecules can be linked by the hand of man to polynucleotides, to which they are not linked in their natural state, and that such molecules can be produced by recombinant and/or synthetic means. Even if for said purposes those sequences may be introduced into living or non-living organisms by methods known to those skilled in the art, and even if those sequences are still present in said organisms, they are still considered to be isolated. In the present invention, the terms "risk", "susceptibility", and "predisposition" are tantamount and are used with respect to the probability of developing a neurodegenerative disease, preferably Alzheimer's disease.

Please replace paragraph [0017] with the following, which has been marked up to show changes:

[0017] In a preferred embodiment of the herein claimed methods, kits, recombinant animals, molecules, assays, and uses of the instant invention, said gene coding for a small GTP-binding protein, is a gene coding for the ras-related protein rab31, also termed rab22b, represented by ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1, or fragments, derivatives, or variants thereof (GenBank accession number Q13636; mRNA GenBank accession number AF183421).

Please replace paragraph [0032] with the following, which has been marked up to show changes:

[0032] In another aspect, the invention features a method of treating or preventing a neurodegenerative disease, in particular AD, in a subject comprising the administration to said subject in a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of an agent or agents which directly or indirectly affect a level, or an activity, or both said level and said activity, of (i) a gene coding for rab31, and/or (ii) a transcription product of a gene coding for rab31, and/or (iii) a translation product of a gene coding for rab31, and/or (iv) a fragment, or derivative, or variant of (i) to (iii). Said agent may comprise a small molecule, or it may also comprise a peptide, an oligopeptide, or a polypeptide. Said peptide, oligopeptide, or polypeptide may comprise an amino acid sequence of ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1, or a fragment, or derivative, or a variant thereof. An agent for treating or preventing a neurodegenerative disease, in particular AD, according to the instant invention, may also consist of a nucleotide, an oligonucleotide, or a polynucleotide. Said oligonucleotide or polynucleotide may comprise a nucleotide sequence of the gene coding for a rab31 protein, either in sense orientation or in antisense orientation.

Please replace paragraphs [0054] to [0056] with the following, which have been marked up to show changes:

[0054] The present invention features a protein molecule shown in ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1, said protein molecule being a translation product of the gene coding for a rab31 protein, or a fragment, or derivative, or variant thereof, for use as a diagnostic target for detecting a neurodegenerative disease, preferably Alzheimer's disease.

[0055] The present invention further features a protein molecule shown in ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1, said protein molecule being a translation product of the gene coding for a rab31 protein, or a fragment, or derivative, or variant thereof, for use as a screening target for reagents or compounds preventing, or treating, or ameliorating a neurodegenerative disease, preferably Alzheimer's disease.

[0056] The present invention features an antibody which is specifically immunoreactive with an immunogen, wherein said immunogen is a translation product of a gene coding for rab31, ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1, or a fragment, or variant, or derivative thereof. The immunogen may comprise

immunogenic or antigenic epitopes or portions of a translation product of said gene, wherein said immunogenic or antigenic portion of a translation product is a polypeptide, and wherein said polypeptide elicits an antibody response in an animal, and wherein said polypeptide is immunospecifically bound by said antibody. Methods for generating antibodies are well known in the art (see Harlow et al., *Antibodies, A Laboratory Manual*, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., 1988). The term "antibody", as employed in the present invention, encompasses all forms of antibodies known in the art, such as polyclonal, monoclonal, chimeric, recombinatorial, anti-idiotypic, humanized, or single chain antibodies, as well as fragments thereof (see Dubel and Breitling, *Recombinant Antibodies*, Wiley-Liss, New York, N.Y., 1999). Antibodies of the present invention are useful, for instance, in a variety of diagnostic and therapeutic methods, based on state-in-the-art techniques (see Harlow and Lane, *Using Antibodies: A Laboratory Manual*, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., 1999 and Edwards R., *Immunodiagnosics: A Practical Approach*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, 1999) such as enzyme-immuno assays (e.g. enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay, ELISA), radioimmuno assays, chemoluminescence-immuno assays, Western-blot, immunoprecipitation and antibody microarrays. These methods involve the detection of translation products of the rab31 gene, or fragments, or derivatives, or variants thereof.

Please replace paragraphs [0061] to [0064] with the following, which have been marked up to show changes:

[0061] FIG. 3 discloses ~~SEQ ID NO: 1~~ SEQ ID NO: 1, the amino acid sequence of rab31 protein (NCBI GenBank accession number: AAB02832, Q13636). The full length human rab31 protein comprises 194 amino acids.

[0062] FIG. 4 shows ~~SEQ ID NO: 2~~ SEQ ID NO: 2, the nucleotide sequence of the human rab31 cDNA coding sequence, comprising 585 nucleotides. The length of rab31 cDNA according to NCBI GenBank entry U59877 is 921 base pairs.

[0063] FIG. 5 depicts ~~SEQ ID NO: 3~~ SEQ ID NO: 3, the nucleotide sequence of the 212 bp rab31 cDNA fragment, identified and obtained by suppressive subtractive hybridization (sequence in 5' to 3' direction).

[0064] FIG. 6 outlines the sequence alignment of ~~SEQ ID NO: 3~~ SEQ ID NO: 3 to the nucleotide sequence of the human rab31 cDNA (GenBank accession number: AF183421).